



J. TYLER McCAULEY
AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
DEPARTMENT OF AUDITOR-CONTROLLER**

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March 24, 2006

TO: Mayor Michael D. Antonovich
Supervisor Gloria Molina
Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Don Knabe

FROM: J. Tyler McCauley *Maria Que*
Auditor-Controller *for*

SUBJECT: **PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT CENTER FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY
CONTRACT REVIEW**

We have completed a contract compliance review of Personal Involvement Center Foster Family Agency (Personal Involvement or Agency), a Foster Family Agency service provider. The review was conducted by the Auditor-Controller's Countywide Contract Monitoring Division.

Background

The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) contracts with Personal Involvement, a private, non-profit, community-based organization to recruit, train, and certify foster care parents for the supervision of children placed in foster care by DCFS. Once the Agency places a child, it is required to monitor the placement until the child is discharged from the program.

Personal Involvement is required to hire qualified social workers to provide case management and act as a liaison between DCFS and foster parents. Personal Involvement oversees a total of 17 certified foster homes in which 31 DCFS children were placed. Personal Involvement is located in Los Angeles in the Second District.

DCFS pays Personal Involvement a negotiated monthly rate, per child placement, established by the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Funding and Rate Bureau. Based on the child's age, Personal Involvement receives between \$1,589 and \$1,865 per month, per child. Out of these amounts, the Agency pays the foster parents

"To Enrich Lives Through Effective and Caring Service"

between \$624 and \$850 per month, per child. For Fiscal Year 2004-05, DCFS paid Personal Involvement approximately \$743,000.

Purpose/Methodology

The purpose of the review was to determine whether Personal Involvement was providing the services outlined in their Program Statement and County contract. We also evaluated the Agency's ability to achieve planned staffing levels. Our monitoring visit included verifying whether Personal Involvement received the appropriate reimbursement rate for each child and whether the certified foster parents received their portion of the reimbursement rate in a timely manner. We reviewed certified foster parent files, children's case files, personnel files, and interviewed the Agency's staff, the children and the foster parents. We also visited a sample of certified foster homes.

Results of Review

A sample of foster parents stated that the services they received from the Agency met their expectations and the children indicated that they enjoyed living with their foster parents. In addition, Personal Involvement maintained the appropriate staffing levels and their social worker caseloads did not exceed the maximum allowed by CDSS Title 22. Personal Involvement also paid the foster parents their monthly payments in a timely manner.

Personal Involvement did not always maintain current court authorizations for the children on psychotropic medications. In addition, Personal Involvement also did not always ensure that foster homes with swimming pools implemented the appropriate safeguards to prevent the children from accessing the pools when an adult is not present.

The details of our review, along with recommendation for corrective action, are attached.

Review of Report

On March 20, 2006, we discussed our report with Personal Involvement who agreed with the findings. In their attached response, Personal Involvement management indicates the actions the Agency has taken to implement the recommendations. We also notified DCFS of the results of our review.

Board of Supervisors

March 24, 2006

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We thank Personal Involvement for their cooperation and assistance during this review. Please call me if you have any questions, or your staff may contact Don Chadwick at (626) 293-1102.

JTM:MMO:DC

Attachment

c: David E. Janssen, Chief Administrative Officer
Dr. David Sanders, Director, Department of Children and Family Services
Earlee Washington, Director, Personal Involvement Center Foster Family Agency
Dr. J. Benjamin Hardwick, CEO, Personal Involvement Center Foster Family Agency
Colleen Anderson, Community Care Licensing
Public Information Office
Audit Committee

**COUNTYWIDE CONTRACT MONITORING DIVISION
FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY PROGRAM
FISCAL YEAR 2005-2006
PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT CENTER FAMILY AGENCY**

PROGRAM SERVICES

Objective

Determine whether Personal Involvement Center Foster Family Agency (Personal Involvement or Agency) provided program services in accordance with their County contract and California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Title 22 Regulations.

Verification

We visited four of the 17 Los Angeles County certified foster homes that Personal Involvement billed the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) for in June and July 2005 and interviewed the four foster parents and five of the seven children placed in the four homes. We also reviewed the case files for the four foster parents and five children. In addition, we reviewed the Agency's monitoring activity.

Results

The foster parents stated the services they received from Personal Involvement met their expectations and the children stated they enjoyed living with their foster parents. Personal Involvement also paid the foster parents their monthly payments in a timely manner.

Personal Involvement needs to improve their oversight of the foster homes to ensure that the foster homes comply with all the provisions of Title 22 and the County contract. In addition, Personal Involvement needs to ensure that foster parents receive required on-going training prior to recertification. Personal Involvement also needs to maintain current court authorizations for children on psychotropic medications. We specifically noted the following issues, a number of which are safety matters.

Foster Home Visitations

- For one (25%) of the four homes, the foster parent did not secure kitchen knives and cleaning detergents as required by the County contract.
- For two homes with swimming pools, the foster parents did not restrict the children's access to the pools when not in use. The entrance gate to one of the pool was propped open by a large potted plant. The second pool was a wading pool that was not emptied after its use. Title 22 regulations require that the Agency ensure

swimming pools and similar bodies of water are inaccessible to children when not in use.

- For one (25%) of the four homes, one child's bedroom was used as a passage to another child's bedroom. In the same home, an unused treadmill and broken patio furniture were stored on a patio outside a child's bedroom. The County contract requires that the Agency monitor to ensure that children's bedrooms are not used as a passageway to another room and that outdoor and indoor passageways, including open porches, are kept free of obstructions.
- For one (25%) of the four homes, the foster parent did not have an emergency escape plan for the upper level of the home as required by the County contract.

Foster Parent Certification

- One (25%) of the four foster parents was recertified after completing only 11 of the 15 hours of training required by the County contract. Subsequent to our review, the foster parent received an additional four hours of training.

Medical Services

- For two (100%) of two children using psychotropic medications, the Agency did not maintain current court authorizations for the administration of the medications as required by the County contract. Subsequent to our review, one child was taken off of the psychotropic medication and the Agency received an updated court authorization for the second child.

Recommendations

Personal Involvement management:

- 1. Ensure that staff adequately monitor foster homes to ensure the foster homes comply with the County contract and Title 22 Regulations, including requirements related to restricted access to swimming pools.**
- 2. Ensure that foster parents complete the required number of training hours specified in the County contract prior to annual recertification.**
- 3. Ensure that current court authorizations for children using psychotropic medications are maintained.**

CLIENT VERIFICATION**Objective**

Determine whether the program participants actually received the services that Personal Involvement billed DCFS.

Verification

We interviewed five children placed in four certified foster homes and four foster parents to confirm the services Personal Involvement billed to DCFS.

Results

The program participants interviewed stated that the services they receive from Personal Involvement generally met their expectations and their assigned social workers visited them regularly.

Recommendation

There are no recommendations for this section.

STAFFING/CASELOAD LEVELS**Objective**

Determine whether Personal Involvement's social workers' case loads do not exceed 15 placements and whether the supervising social worker does not supervise more than six social workers, as required by the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations.

Verification

We interviewed the director and two social workers and reviewed case load statistics and payroll records for July and August 2005.

Results

Personal Involvement's director supervised two social workers and carried an average of three cases. The Agency's two social workers maintained an average of 15 cases.

Recommendation

There are no recommendations for this section.

STAFFING QUALIFICATIONS**Objective**

Determine whether Personal Involvement's staff possess the education and work experience qualifications required by their County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. In addition, determine whether the Agency conducted hiring clearances prior to hiring their staff and provided ongoing training to staff.

Verification

We interviewed Personal Involvement's director and two social workers. In addition, we reviewed each staff's personnel file for documentation to confirm their education and work experience qualifications, hiring clearances and ongoing training.

Results

Personal Involvement's director and social workers possessed the education and work experience required by the County contract and Title 22 regulations. In addition, Personal Involvement conducted criminal clearances and provided ongoing training to staff assigned to the County contract. However, three employees' initial health exams were not conducted within the timeframes required by the County contract. The County contract requires that all employees receive an initial health screening not more than a year prior to or seven days after employment. The three employees' health exams were on average two months late.

Recommendation

4. **Personal Involvement management ensure that staff receive initial health exams within the time frames specified in the County contract.**



PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT CENTER, Inc.

Foster Family Agency

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March 21, 2006

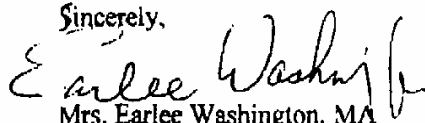
To: Mayor Michael D. Antonovich
Supervisor Gloria Molina
Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Don Knabe

Dear Board of Supervisors:

We would like to thank Mr. Brian Henricks and his staff for making this audit experience a positive one; it was my first audit as Administrator of our Foster Family Agency, and I appreciate our frank discussions on how to make our Agency better.

Attached for your review is our response to the Audit Results conducted by your office. Please call me if additional information is needed, or if you have questions. Thank you.

Sincerely,


Mrs. Earlee Washington, MA
PIC / FFA Administrator

Recommendation No. I – FOSTER HOME VISITATION:

1. Securing of Kitchen Knives and cleaning detergents -- a **Corrective Action Plan** was given to the foster home, with a 5 day time line for correction. All dangerous utensils and chemicals are secured. Our monthly in-home inspector checks each month to be sure these items remain secured.
2. Two Homes with Swimming Pool Infractions – **Corrective Action Plans** were written and given to each home with a 5 day time line for correction. The entrance gate to one home's swimming pool has had a lock added and the lock is used when the pool is not in use. The wading pool has been emptied that had water in it (incidentally, this pool belonged to a grandchild of the foster parent, and the pool is no longer in the back yard of the foster parent's home).
3. Child's bedroom used as a passageway to another child's bedroom -- A **Corrective Action Plan** was given to this foster home with a 5 day correction deadline. The foster parent exchanged bedrooms with the foster child so that the foster child is in a bedroom that does not lead to any other room in the home. The broken furniture and unused treadmill have been thrown out and are no longer a danger.
4. Need for emergency Escape Plan – A **Corrective Action Plan** was written and give to foster home with a 5 day timeline for correction. The home now has an emergency escape plan, which includes the correct escape ladder.

Recommendation No. II – FOSTER PARENT CERTIFICATION

1. Completion of 15 hours of on-going training – All foster parents are now aware that if quarterly training sessions that are conducted by the Agency are missed, they have the option of scheduling a weekly session to make up the missing hours, or they can attend training from another Agency and we would give them credit for attendance provided they gave us proof of attendance. It is now clear to them that if a total of 15 hours are not received, they will loose their certification as a foster parent with our Agency.

Recommendation No. III – MEDICAL SERVICES

1. Children on psychotropic meds – Our Agency received the court authorization from our Mental Health Agency; previously, our Agency did not have a written rule of thumb or a process for getting court docs on our foster children. Now, in our FFA Handbook, this issue is addressed and we have meetings with the therapist on a regular basis to review documents, and give updates on the foster children who are also receiving services from our Mental Health Agency.

Recommendation No. IV – *STAFFING QUALIFICATIONS*

1. Our Quality Assurance Officer has established a process with the help of our Human Resource coordinator that will insure that all FFA staff receive an initial health screening in a timely manner, as well as meet all other employment requirements as outlined in detail in Title 22.